

vol.0 no.0



COVER STORY

defining
drawn & quarterly

BOOKS

the rotten interview
lydon vs. lazar

MUSIC

cd's
live shows

ART

the power of
low art

FILM

indie film
reality

COMICS

4 locals
expose

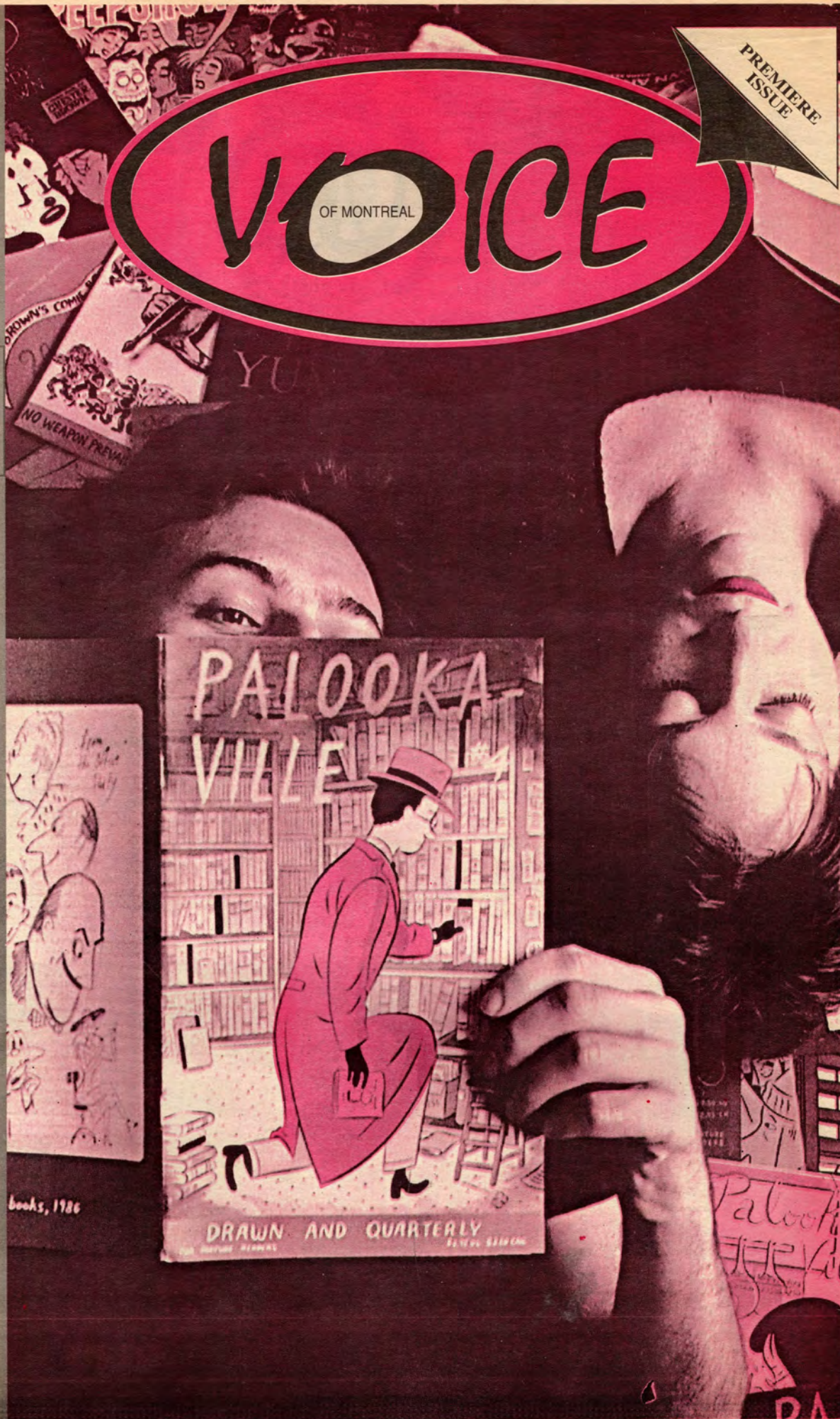
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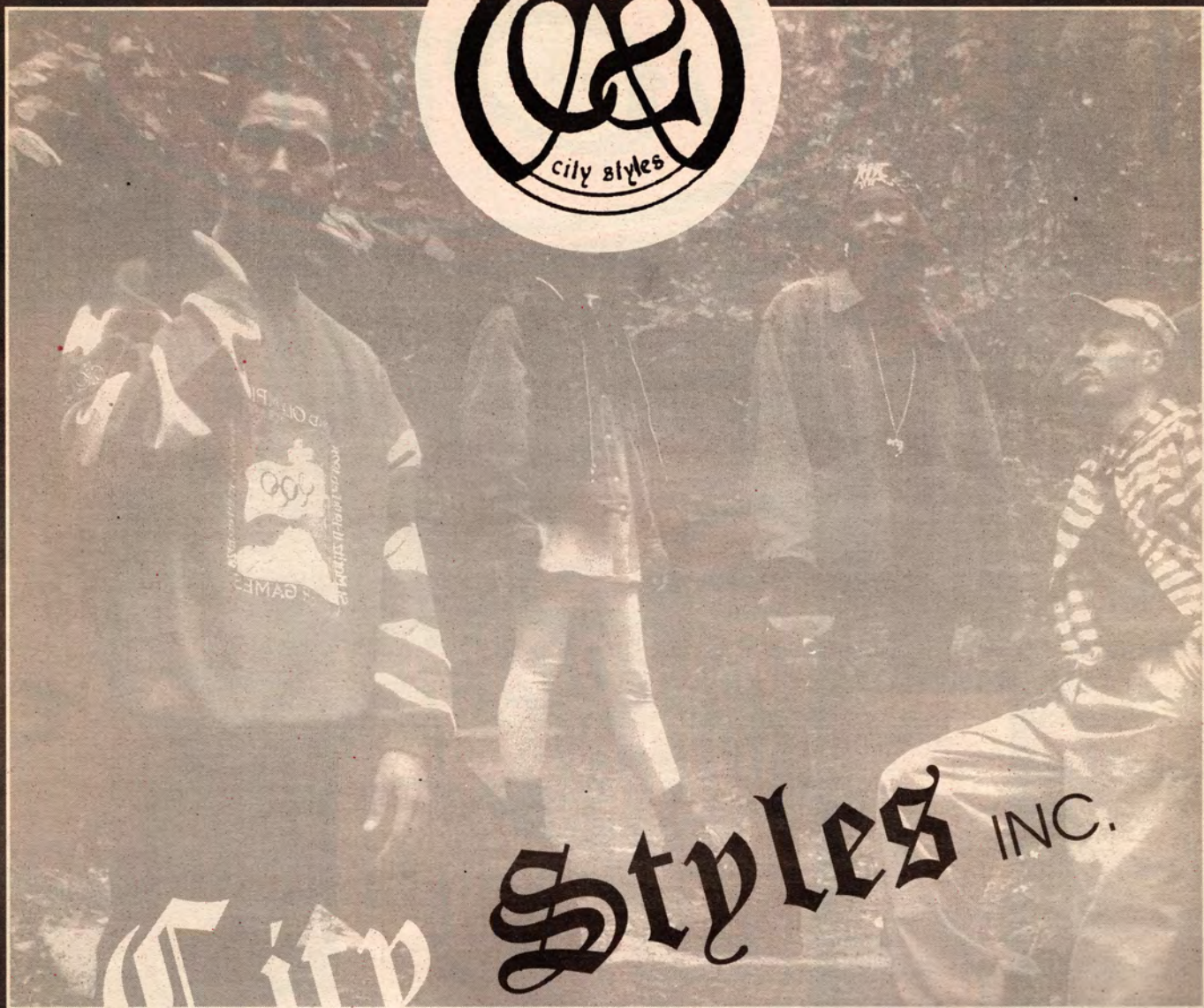
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ISSUE

VOICE

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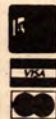
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The *Voice of Montreal* is an inquiry into culture. The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English defines culture in two forms; intellectual development, and the production of bacteria. Intellectual development is the pertinent definition, holding primary interest to the *VOICE*.

We at the *VOICE* are convinced that an individual's involvement in, and exposure to the various domains of culture leads to intellectual development. Our convictions can be explained in the following hypothetical context. If a rational individual is exposed to mainstream popular culture (e.g. the Courtney Love soap opera, Alex Colville, Oliver Stone, etc.), and is simultaneously involved in ground-level culture (e.g. New Kingdom, comic-jams, *bhangra*, etc.) then the risk of being enveloped by nausea runs quite high. This consequence results from the polar contrast and major differences between ground and mainstream culture. Contrast is the key to this equation. For in the *sphere of culture (sub-inter-pop-ethno-bi-multi), individuals who are continually engulfed by contrast will eventually gain the ability to decipher what is authentic, from what is not. This ability or tool is the essence of culture, it is the point where the intellect begins the processing and comprehension of culture.

A hybrid of languages, an amalgamation of people, Montreal is an experience in divergence that results in cultural abundance. We felt it imperative to create a literary vehicle, *The Voice of Montreal*, to grant a print-form medium of expression to the writers, artists, independent filmmakers, comic artists, and musicians in Montreal. Neither a consumer's guide nor a listings resource, the *Voice of Montreal's* mandate is to investigate the sphere of culture*.

Read the *VOICE*, investigate culture, develop your intellect. We hope that **Volume 0, Issue 0** is as an enjoyable and interesting experience for you to read, as it was for us to create. This issue is only a brief introduction, more will be revealed.

Suroosh Y. Alvi
Editor

DRAWN AND QUARTERLY Survival of the Idealists

The conventional comic book may soon be a collectors item. The time has come for the glorified super-hero macho-man comics to move on. "Alternative" or "underground" comics, once on the peripheries of a marginal sub-culture are gaining both readership and recognition. The new heroes are people we can identify with and relate to, realistic characters with positive attributes and negative shortcomings. Thanks to a new breed of comic artists, many of whom fall back on personal experiences, the comics contain a human element that makes them so appealing. *Eightball*, by Berkeley's Daniel Clowes; *Hate*, by Seattle's Peter Bagge; *Peepshow*, by Toronto's Joe Matt; *Yummy Fur*, and *The Playboy*, by Chateaugay-born and now Vancouver resident Chester Brown are just a few of the many neo-realistic comics that have been gaining popularity in the past few years.

Here in Montreal, comic artists have increased greatly in numbers over the past few years. An indicator would be the recent comic-jams at the **Stornaway Gallery**; innovative gatherings where comic art, music, and enthusiasts converge. The jams allow the readers and art fans to observe the artists produce their craft. Montreal it would seem is the new mecca of comic art; not just a handful of dreamers, but an actual community of gifted and aspiring artists that work together to promote one another's talent.

The question comes to mind; who is responsible for the recent rise of comic art in *Montreal*? There are many potential theories and explanations, but the majority of people would point their fingers toward *Drawn & Quarterly Publications'* Chris Oliveros and Marina Lesenko; the Montreal-based comics and comics anthology publishers. By emphasizing presentation, Oliveros and Lesenko strive to create an overall product that gives justice to the ingenious stories and skillful drawings of their carefully chosen artists. The slick presentation of artistic narrative has gained them praise from artists and enthusiasts alike. Local comic stud Gavin McInnes, of **PERVERT COMIX** fame says "It's like a good coffee table book, very original with incredibly great artists. Their prime concern is stories, and they are responsible for making production into an art form."

One need only look as far as *The Best of Drawn and Quarterly* (1993), a visually stimulating anthology of twenty-four different artists. Printed in Hong Kong, the quality is of the highest calibre. In the introduction to this classy anthology, *Fantagraphics Books'* Peter

Bagge writes: "...*DRAWN & QUARTERLY* (has) been a consistently satisfying read during its entire run....*Dangle*, *Dirty Plotte*, *Palooka-Ville*, *Peep Show*, *Slutburger*, and *Yummy Fur* make up the most consistent, high-quality imprint I have ever known of. There quite simply isn't a clunker in the bunch!" To those who have had little exposure to comics, this anthology would be a perfect place to step into the world of alternative comics.

One of Oliveros's main inspirations was *RAW*, the avant-garde comics magazine edited by Art Spiegelman and Françoise Mouly. This over-sized, brilliantly designed magazine was perhaps the first forum to view comics as an art form, taking it well beyond the tired clichés of superhero comics or the typical dope and sex formulas of the 1960's and 70's underground comics. This was also the first magazine to provide then-aspiring cartoonist and New York art student Oliveros with a rejection slip back in 1984.

By 1988, Oliveros began working with several people on a comics anthology, funded by the Quebec government no less, called *CORE*. "Ten different people with ten different ideas and what seemed like a bad product" states the amiable Chris. He goes on to say that "there was a lot of good will with... unfortunately no vision, and this ultimately lead to its' demise." Fortunately for us, he persevered in his bid to put an anthology together.

The project evolved as Chris and Marina were travelling Europe in 1989. They had been corresponding with a number of comic artists and cartoonists in the hope of getting the anthology together. Upon their return to Montreal, the duo began hunting for comic artists through tiny ads placed in the *Village Voice* and *Mother Jones*. The duo got in touch with New York-based illustrator Anne Bernstein (cover artist for the very first issue of *Drawn & Quarterly*), who in turn referred them to well-known cartoonists J.D. King, Peter Bagge, and Daniel Clowes.

It took one year of planning, an initial investment from Chris' father, Dr. Rafael Oliveros, and faith in the project before the first anthology of *Drawn & Quarterly* came out in April of 1990.

Looking at the original *CORE* project, it was by no means a waste of time. It provided Chris with valuable experience in the business end of comics, printers, the distribution system, and the crucial realization that **vision** is necessary for any project to succeed. This is the essential difference between a good idea, and a successful product.

Today, *Drawn & Quarterly* is operating smoothly with clear vision and direction. You see, Chris and Marina operate with a specific philosophy, and the philosophy is used to achieve certain



ideas. This is represented by *Drawn & Quarterly's* small scale operations. Operating out of their apartment, Marina and Chris make most of their decisions sitting at the round kitchen table facing the Arahova Souvlaki eaterie. In the living room a Seth (*Palooka-Ville*) cartoon looks on with two characters in dire straits, and one commenting to the other: "You son of a bitch, you told me there'd be money in the comic business."

Maintaining the small scale is necessary for Chris and Marina to be successful, but not in the monetary sense. Chris discusses success, "Many people have the somewhat unfortunate notion that success is something inextricably linked to 'growth'; in other words, a company cannot possibly be successful unless they increase in size, by adding new employees, expanding their market share, and so on..."

In the comic world, this definition can often backfire. One example would be the American company Fantagraphics, who despite having several critical and financial successes such as *Eightball*, *Love & Rockets* and *Hate*, still could not keep up with the swelling payrolls for the more than ten workers employed in their offices. As a result, they came up with a scheme, two imprints called *MONSTER COMICS* and *EROS COMICS* to avoid bankruptcy. That's right, monster and porno comics. This is a sad scenario where artistic ideals and values are sacrificed simply to make dough.

The constitution of success for Chris and Marina has little to do with money. It's more oriented toward the achievement of certain ideals, surviving financially and not sacrificing their integrity as publishers (by publishing porno crap to stay afloat). Their definition of success is something like this: An artist who has **development potential** is signed, a long-term relationship is maintained between themselves and the artist, and they all survive financially, hence the operation is successful.

An example of this definition

would be the relationship Chester Brown maintains with *Drawn & Quarterly*. Although he hasn't been signed for the longest duration on *Drawn & Quarterly's* bill of artists, he is the most successful. Brown has had monetary success, however his achievement lies primarily within the Oliveros/Lesenko realm of success.

The radical and relatively new comic *Underwater* (Issue #1, August '94) embodies Brown's success. Through his refusal to formulate his work like Peter Bagge did with *HATE*, Chester Brown's priority in the art-form itself rather than the money that can be made, shines through in powerful and haunting images.

Instead of sticking to the extremely respected and popular *Yummy Fur* concept, Chester Brown has presented a challenge to himself by departing from the neo-realism of some of his previous work, and entering an unknown galaxy *Underwater*; an open-ended and fascinating concept. Many might suggest that the incomprehensible gibberish language in the first issue of *Underwater* is from the perspective of the new-born baby. Marina quickly and incisively counters this neither insightful nor original point with "maybe it's all just underwater". — The reality of *Underwater* is that no one can define the concept but Chester Brown himself.

In music, film and literature, such abstract work might cause hesitation on the part of the publishers, record executives and distribution companies. The obvious reason is money, but the *Drawn & Quarterly* comic world operates differently. Oliveros holds no hesitation over the departure of the successful *Yummy Fur*; he sees *Underwater* as a positive step in the evolution and development of Chester Brown.

What is plainly evident is that Oliveros and Lesenko are insightful and calculating publishers, who are surviving in a helluva risky business. Maintaining this kind of integrity as a

COVER STORY

publishing house, along with mandating full-artistic freedom (obviously) is an absolute priority to *Drawn & Quarterly Publications*, and contributes greatly to their survival-oriented success.

This idealism hasn't gone unnoticed, in fact this small-scale operation is held in the highest-esteem in the comic world. Recently they met with the president of France's *Casterman Comics* (publishers of *Tin-Tin*) to discuss the rights of an artist. Wishing to pay them a visit at their offices, and since there are no official offices, the corporate dude from France had to invite them over to his fancy hotel for a small drink; "Rather embarrassing" Chris adds meekly.

For all the aspiring comic artists in Montreal, the need to challenge themselves is of utmost importance. According to Oliveros, it's through challenging themselves and seeking versatility that they can develop. Marina believes that the artist must stand up to their own limitations, and then walk through them before they can develop. If an artist shows up with his/her artwork that they've been labouring over for days, even if it looks great to Oliveros and Lesenko they probably won't blink an eye. One submission says **nothing** about **development potential**. However, the folks at *Drawn & Quarterly* keep their feelers and contacts spread out over long periods of time and continents, watching prospects grow.

A perfect example of this

would be Adrian Tomine, the much-talked about 20-year old English major at Berkeley. With his first issue of *Optic Nerve* coming out in early 1995, he is someone that Chris and Marina have been watching since he was 18, signing him only recently.

Receiving approximately three to four submissions a week from different artists, Oliveros says that it takes a fine balance of an artistic and literary sensibility tied directly into development potential to make up a good comic artist. It may sound like an awesome amount of natural talent would be needed; through dedicated reading and practice in drawing, the overall balance could be struck. Judging from the sort of comic-jams going on down at *Stornaway*, it wouldn't be a surprise if a future *Drawn & Quarterly* prospect turns up sometime soon.

Research
Edgar Silveira
Written by: S.A.

-WHEN SHE MET ME SHE
KNEW WHAT IT WAS TO
HAVE A REAL MAN...



-I NEVER TRUSTED ANY
WOMAN BEFORE HER BUT
SHE WAS INCAPABLE OF
TELLING A LIE...



-SHE HAD RECENTLY BEEN
BEREAVED, AND I FELT IT WAS
MY DUTY TO CONSOLE HER..



-I WAS A REGULAR STUD, AND
YET IN BED SHE TAUGHT ME
NOT TO PLAY THE FIELD..



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D & Q anthology, p.16.

GREENLAND

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music

STEREOLAB/PEST 5000
GREENLAND PRODUCTIONS
 SEPTEMBER 14, WOODSTOCK

A long time ago, in a galaxy far, far away... Stereolab went on tour. They toured with UNREST in the United States, and failed to pay us a visit. That's okay though, because on September 14th they sought and gained redemption at Woodstock.

Before the doors opened, I wondered how many people would actually show up. The attendance at most of the shows this summer was abysmal, in fact it left me baffled — quality bands, few people. This story however, has a different plot. As a precursor to the intergalactic dreamy experience called STEREOLAB, we were treated to an energetic and bouncy show put on by locals PEST 5000. PEST 5000 are just getting better with every show, establishing their own sound by playing many gigs both here and down south. Hopefully these guys will stick around.

By the time the six STEREOLAB-ers took the stage, the place was jammed. Each member of the band remaining as subdued as the other, except for the sweaty drummer with the impeccable beats. They mechanically ripped through old and new songs, with "Transporter sans bouger" being just one of many sonic highlights. The fifteen minute encore was a climactic and appropriate way to call it an evening. STEREOLAB can visit my planet anytime.

-Rufus Raxlonovitch

RAMP RAGE '94
MANY BANDS, MANY SKATERS
GREENLAND PRODUCTIONS/DISTRICT 6 PRODUCTIONS
 SEPTEMBER 4, McConnell Arena

The unification of ramps, hip-hop, punk rock, and a hockey rink is a radical supposition. Innovative, progressive, whatever, the idea is challenging yet simple enough. The implementation of such a theory however, is an all-together different kind of dare. In the words of Greenland's Nick Farkas, Ramp Rage '94 was a "logistical nightmare". This wasn't apparent to me. From my non-skater, non-musician, lazy-boy perspective, the adrenalin-fueled extravaganza was both ground-

breaking and successful. Here's a subjective interpretation of the event.

The McGill security crew seemed bewildered by the entire event. It seemed that the music wasn't to their particular taste, and gratefully they ignored the havoc wreaking skaters. I think they simply didn't understand what was going on.

For the skaters, it was exactly what they wanted: fifteen hours of pleasure and pain. The McConnell Arena surface was ideal for skating, they appropriately turned out in full force.

The bands were in good form, the reckless skaters and chaotic atmosphere bringing out the best in them. Queens



photo by Suroosh Y. Alvi

New York's NEW SCHOOL laid down abrasive beats and a politically incorrect philosophy that made my day. It's not often that you get to hear people dedicate songs to themselves because they jacked off before getting to the show. Toronto's Trigger Happy played a riot-inciting show, and will be returning to Montreal on the NOFX bill, slated for November 15.

The only thing I was confused about was who the "professional" skaters from California were, as opposed to a couple of punks from the West Island. For those of you weren't there, here's a "full-action" visual for you to enjoy.

-Suroosh Y. Alvi

furnaceface

this will make you happy



FURNACE FACE

This Will Make You Happy

Cargo Records

Fluid Waffle kicked out Steve Dununzio because he was a crappy AM radio guy. Five years later, they have Honest Injun's Marty Jones, his sampler, sold out shows in every province except Quebec and the name FURNACE FACE. This is their third C.D. and they seem to have replaced their "white-guy-college-funk" with a much heavier "dfff dfff" sound that will make you happy. Shit, even if you don't like it there's plenty of little esoteric fillers you can play for your friends or put on your answering machine.

—Gavin MacInnes

ORGANIZED KONFUSION

Stress - The Extinction Agenda

Hollywood Basic

Brace yourselves for 'Stress-The Extinction Agenda', Organized Konfusion's sophomore endeavour. Their second LP continues their legacy of reflective ghetto-life commentary and maniacal high speed rhyme patterns. Despite poor promotional support and weak record sales for their solid first effort on Hollywood Basic, O.K. returns to provide a deep and well developed album. *Stress - The Extinction Agenda* is definitely not easy listening and may only reach the minds of the hardest hip-hop heads. Two delectable elements from the album are its use of overly familiar samples on a couple tracks, and lack of variety in moods. Nonetheless, this album ranks high in its ability to capture the essence of the day to day 'black inner city' struggle, and is a strong contribution to the realm of East-Coast hip-hop.

—Manchilde

SLUG

The Out Sound

PCP/Matador

Imagine yourself lost in the downtrodden bustling city that is Los Angeles. Stumbling along amongst the noise and the garbage, you sit down on the corner and hear something rumbling up behind you. The volume reaches deafening proportions, what you might think is an L.A. soundtrack is actually the monster sound of SLUG. No holds barred white noise with enough rhythm to swing ya, brutal guitars up front, the smooth yet in-your-face low end of the bass, and the thunderous rumble of the drums. SLUG are back, with vocals that snarl like a king-fu archvillan, capable of putting a dent in any helmet, driving you unsane at the same time. Listen to this record with a friend so you don't get hurt.

—Rufus Raxlonovitch

THE JON SPENCER BLUES EXPLOSION

Orange

Matador

The latest from former Pussy Galore frontman Jon Spencer is what the Stones might have sounded like if, instead of seeing the future unfold before them, they felt indifference close like a fist. Throughout *Orange*, defiant shouts of "blues explosion" invoke the self-laudatory ghost of Mark E. Smith, while guitars and drums mesh in alternately smooth and sparse, jarring and jumbled passages so ineluctable you don't even notice the lack of bass.

Tracks like *Sweat* and *Full Grown* are things of beauty and power before which the likes of supposed tough guy Hank Rollins could only cower in wonder and fear. Follow the instructions in *Blues X Man* and turn the stereo up; the studio-tweaked storm after the calm will rip your head off and leave you scrambling for the **REWIND** button.

As Spencer snarls in *Dissect*, "Play the blues, punk."

—Dickbird

LOVE SPIT LOVE

Love Spit Love

Imago

One doesn't have to have been a big Psychedelic Furs fan to fall in love with this *Love Spit Love* album. But loving what Richard Butler has created in the past makes his new project *Love Spit Love* all the more enjoyable. The voice is familiar and soothing, the lyrics poetic and true, and the music is full of freshness and pain. A beautiful combination. The album has dominated my cd player for the past month and is even better when listened to on the road at 100km an hour flying off to a better place.

—Cecil Seaskull

BEATNIK FILMSTARS

Laid Back and English

La-Di-Da

They aren't beatniks, they aren't laid back, they aren't film stars, but they're English for sure. But it's just plain not fair to limit them like that. This is what the Jesus and Mary Chain would sound like if they were

NUSRAT FATEH ALI KHAN

The Last Prophet

Real World

Emanating from the depths of his impressive belly, Khan's powerful, resonating vocals spiral and seduce, luring his audience slowly into the web of his wicked persuasions. He starts off slow and low with otherworldly moaning and mellow singing, gradually increasing in tempo. The Pakistani's singing progresses in intensity, and as he does in each of his pieces, his vocals take a surreal leap into an ecstatic space, exhibiting amazing range and full control over his voice. The net effect of the sonorous tablas, the metronomic hand-claps, the ever-present harmonium, and the mighty voice is mesmerisation. This is not recommended driving music. *The Last Prophet*, Khan's fifth album for the Real World label is proof that Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan is a king amongst kings in the world of qawwali music. For the Sufis (the spiritual dimension of Islam), qawwali serves to heighten consciousness levels, while simultaneously deepening faith. For all the agnostics, pagans and idol-worshippers in the house, this would be appropriate music to simply chill out to. The novice to Khan's music or qawwali in general might want to start with *Mustt Mustt* (1990) because of its "westernized" pop sound. *Shahen-Shah* (1989) is a more traditional album with eight intricately woven tracks, and *The Last Prophet* (1994) is a beautiful four piece composition. This is not music for impatient people.

—Suroosh Y. Alvi

THE BEATNUTS

The Beatnuts

Relativity/Violator

Quite a phunky NYC jazz/hieroglyphics inspired crew, with engaging hypnotic loops. "Are You Ready" and "Props Over Here" are two of the many smooth like *butta* tracks that can be found. Yet JuJu, Psycho and Fashion aren't saying anything that will cause you to reevaluate life. After House of Pain, The Beatnuts are next in line to get their analogy licenses revoked. However, The Beatnuts will enlighten you concerning their daily routines, including what they might conceivably do in a number of possible scenarios. For example they are self confessed "Pussy eating fools" as slated on "the track Lick the P'ssy", and Psycho is currently evading Fred Flinstone after romancing Wilma doggy style. Hopefully everything will be OK.

—Derek Beckles

manic/depressives rather than just sleepyheads and were sure enough of their musicianship to let you hear the individual instruments. Maybe they're more like the Pixies without the caffeine, or the Stooges with a little restraint and songs that make that restraint worthwhile. A diamond in the rough, this. The guitars are everywhere: always loud, alternately moaning and churning, screeching and chiming. The Filmstars owe a lot to many, but I'll give you a quarter if you're able to write out less than ten IOU's for each tune. And that's a compliment.

—Mark Lazar

FARM

Hullabaloo

Sire/Reprise

Not only do the originals on this pile manage to be both irritating and

boring in their cloying, slick, pandering radiocity, but the Farm have the gall to take the Flamin' Groovies sinister ode to sexual psychosis, "Shake some action", call it a Farm original, and run it through the effects rack so many times that you recognize it, but you wish you didn't. Somehow these tame Britons manage to take a song that menaced and rocked at the same time and turn it into one that whines and whimpers. Well, at least it fits in well with the rest of the album.

—Mark Lazar

JERU THE DAMAJA

The Sun Rises in the East

Payday/ffrr/Polygram

Another serving of what one should expect from Brooklyn hip-hop. Jeru is a chip off Gang Starr's block. Guru and DJ Premier are behind the mixer on this debut, churning out healthy beats that are equal parts Public Enemy and Blue Note Jazz. Some clever samples and Jeru's smooth rhyming make the ride a pleasant one, but don't look to songs like 'da Bichez' and 'Ain't the Devil Happy' for revealing social commentary. Nothing new

REVIEWS



here, but Jeru and crew have the oldschool meets newschool hip-hop game down to a science.

—Harris Newman

THE JESUS LIZARD

Down

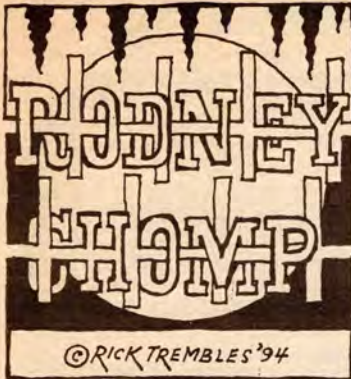
Touch and Go/Cargo

The Jesus Lizard is back, equipped with their usual bag of tricks; the jagged edged aluminum guitar



maelstrom, the trashcan drums, the bulldozer bass lines and the drunken howls of poet extraordinaire, Mr. David Yow. Ambiance ranges from "The Associate"'s alleycat strut to "Elegy", Yow's first and probably last take on legit crooning. While not their strongest material ever released, 'Down' is a thick stripe on the shoulder of this indie rock sergeant major.

—Harris Newman



HI, MY NAME IS RODNEY. THE BASIC PREMISE OF THIS STRIP WILL BE SIMPLE ENOUGH: I'M GOING TO INTRODUCE YOU TO MANY WHIMSICAL CHARACTERS THROUGHOUT ALL OUR TRAVELS!

-BARNEY BOBCAT.

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SEE WHAT I MEAN? THIS PARTICULAR BEAST WAS OF NO THREAT, BUT I'VE BEEN TOLD THAT UNBEKNOWNST TO YOU OR I, CREATURES OF IMMEASURABLE POWERS OF DESTRUCTION MAY LIE UP AHEAD!



by Rick Trembles

Why I Hate Children

First of all, they're STUPID. I mean it. Trying to carry on a conversation with a child is tedious to say the least...

Then there's the much talked about so-called ART that they do. Everyone feels so obligated to encourage their "creativity" when what they could really use is a bit of constructive criticism...

The way you constantly have to censor everything you say like they aren't going to learn bad words or discover the cruel reality of life eventually...

They completely lack any originality and when they hook onto some "JOKE" or catchphrase, they add volume and repetition making it a joyous experience for all...

Thank God for my parents I was a model child...



by Holly

GOOD THINGS ABOUT MONTREAL

SO AFTER I QUIT THE NATIONAL BALLET I HAD TO PAY FOR MY SITAR P.H.D. BY COLOURING JAPANESE HORROR CARTOONS.



THERE'S GOOD ARTISTS HERE.



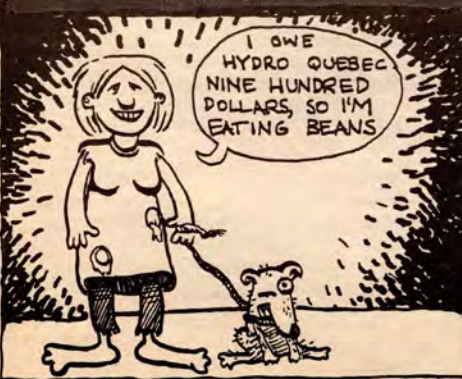
THERE'S BABES EVERYWHERE.



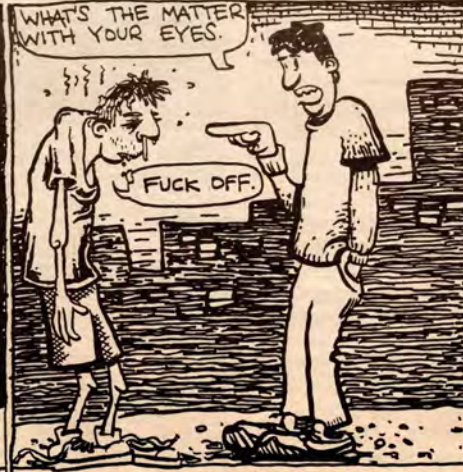
THERE'S ALWAYS FUN THINGS HAPPENING.

by Gavin McInnes

BAD THINGS ABOUT MONTREAL



NO ONE HAS ANY MONEY.



HERDIN IS POPULAR.



THE COPS ARE SCARY...

by Gavin McInnes

ROTTEN: FRESH AS A DAISY

INTERVIEW

By MARK LAZAR

Mark Lazar talks to John Lydon about his recent book, *Rotten: No Irish, No Blacks, No Dogs*, and John Lydon tells Mark Lazar what he thinks of what Mark Lazar said about John Lydon's book, *Rotten: No Irish, No Blacks, No Dogs*.

The idea of John Lydon breaking the silence seems a bit, um, silly. Let's be blunt: The guy talks up a storm; this really can't qualify as words from a previously silent fellow. He does interviews often, but he's usually so insistent upon talking about exactly what he wants to talk about that the poor interviewer (that's me) winds up cowed into letting him have this way with the event.

Things weren't shaping up to be any different for me. As the nice woman who arranged my phone interview with Mr. Lydon hung up, she added quite ominously, "good luck." Earlier in the call, she'd warned me to stay away from certain topics -e.g. drugs (I'd seen John skewer Conan O'Brien when the Harvard boy brought up Kurt C.'s disgusting demise)- and to read his new book (I'd also seen John cut Tom Snyder off at the tops of his socks when the sideburned chuckler persisted in asking uninformed questions about music). She gave me the impression that John just might decide to hang up if he felt the interview weren't rolling along quite smoothly enough. I was definitely intimidated by the prospect of having John Lydon shout obscenities into the phone and then slam it down because of my incompetence, so I pored over his autobiography, *Rotten: No Irish, No Blacks, No Dogs* (St. Martin's Press), like 80% of my grade depended on it.

It turned out that the percentage was closer to 95: John's not one to sit around waiting patiently for some no-name writer to figure things out. I stayed on my toes, kept my eyes open, and the publicist's advice served me well, on the whole.

"I, indeed, had a lot of problems even within the band. They just thought my voice was hideous. You know, 'Why can't you make it nice?' Well why should I? Are you aware of what I've written here?"

In the past, Mr Lydon hasn't had much to say about the Pistols and the events immediately prior to and following their brief career. This book is full of answers to the questions that Johnny Rotten wouldn't (and for a time couldn't) answer. It's a real, live biography, and it's a good story. Lydon, who tends -as the publicist warned- to clam up when asked about touchy subjects (for whatever reason), thrives on the autobiographical format.

A tight-lipped 16 years after the Pistols shook themselves apart, John recounts his whole experience

with candor and thoughtful perspective, uncharacteristically volunteering information about his family, his wife, and his own feelings about his companions in the Pistols adventure. Billy Idol, Banshee Steve Severin, and filmmaker Don Letts and many others offer background on Mid '70s London. Extensive comments from John's father (family plays a much more important part in John's life than one might guess) open a little window into the making of Johnny Rotten and the subsequent rebuilding of John Lydon.

He takes this opportunity to set the record straight about Sid & Nancy, punk in England, punk in America, the lyrics, the music, Public Image, the hangers-on, the

many of the key players were interviewed specifically for the book, and, as you might expect for a man with a reputation like his, they don't all have nice things to say about John. Pistols guitarist Steve Jones recalls his first impression of John as "asshole... but smart."

"And I'm in full agreement with that," chuckles a satisfied-sounding John Lydon, seeming pleased that someone has gotten the mix just right.

"They [the interviews] were done for the book: I didn't lift anything off magazines," says Lydon. "There's a lot of contradictions in there: people, you know, disagreeing with me, the damn nerve of it," he laughs, in a phony American

"I didn't put this together to tell the world how great I am -it's not done for that at all. I could agree with a lot of people that I'm not very nice. I'm just not interested in being nice. It's so phony: 'Have a nice day' Sorry, my jaw would crack if I had to say shite like that."

"[I saw the Sex Pistols as] a huge dose of honesty, hence that last line at the last gig we ever did in San Francisco, 'Ever had the feeling you've been cheated?' because I did feel cheated. I thought the audience had been cheated, I thought we all were."

The greatest achievement of *Rotten*, beyond its remarkably lucid and straightforward reportage and its rescue of long-

made a career of not being nice, and had a clear enough vision of his own meanness that it, somehow, spoke to people. John makes the origins of his apparent bitterness and malevolence seem so

obvious, so natural; one starts to wonder why anyone even tries to be nice at all. "It's just like medicine. No one likes the taste of it, but you have to go through it to get better, and that's just the way things are", he tells me. "When bands write music for the masses, really, I think that's the most condescending shite. It's all very corporate and safe, 'Well this seems to be what people like, so we'll have ten versions of it.' ...

"You've got to break that monotony. I'm sure that a lot of that is not what people specifically want but what they're told they want, because those are the records that are promoted big time in the stores... Walk into Tower Records and you won't see big signs saying 'Juno Reactor records here,' if, indeed, anybody knows who he is."

"If only these bands would stop accepting categories, 'We're a grunge band; grunge bands don't do that.' Oh, fuck off."

But his disdain for organizations and name-tagging doesn't stop with the easy mainstream targets: Phil Collins, grunge, monarchy, whatever. The book pulls no punches. John doesn't even pause to take a breath before he says precisely what he thinks -thoughts that even his fans might not like to hear- about trends that are supposed to be "underground." He is equally spiteful -if not moreso- of movement that, rather than oozing out from the center, grow in from the fringes and, in the process, become horribly catholic: feminism ("The feminist movement became oppressive very quickly," p. 309), gay activism ("Gay liberation is not after equal rights at all. It's to be accepted as this one great lump. If a homosexual inside that movement dares stray away from what they term as the norm, then they victimize that person," p. 309 also), (→ p. 12)



John Lydon

"Pistols guitarist Steve Jones recalls his first impression of John as 'an asshole...but smart.'"

shysters, the managers, the gobbing, the other bands, and, most of all, about Johnny Rotten, née Lydon.

"To, at last, present, as honestly as I could, my side of things," was the goal, John tells me, sounding more than a little exasperated with the whole ordeal. "For 17 years or so, I really kept quiet about that whole part of my life. And I found that to be a bit of a mistake because too many people have been given a free rein to fantasize and waffle, and basically to rewrite my part in history."

There's been a "horrendous amount" of speculation, says John, "books flying left, right, and center, magazines, theories. It's a bit too much for anyone to put up with. And none of it's been particularly accurate. None of it's managed to capture the feeling of that time. I hope my book does."

Adding strength and notable credibility to the story is the fact

accent. "But you have to print that, because it gives you the perspective that, so far, I've not read in anything else. All of us are not absolutely infallible, and no one has a perfect memory. And neither should you, when recounting historical events, just put it all down to facts, figures, and dates. It gives you no overall feel..."

lost photos, is its crystallized expression of John Lydon's worldview: individualism at all costs. And damned if it's not simple to say and hard to do. Through his descriptions, Lydon manages to explicate just about everything he's done in the past 20 years: the nastiness, the oddness.

All the apparent contradictions untangle themselves through the stories of John's adventures and his fury at various promoters, interviewers, critics, fans, and, particularly, Malcolm McLaren (about whom he writes "MALCOLM JUST DIDN'T GET IT" as a sort of closer to the chapter on the Pistols' breakup). At the end, somehow, everything is tied together and the life of John Lydon actually makes sense. One hopes folks like Conan and Tom read this. One wishes Bill Grundy were still around to read it -maybe he'd get some real insight about things, and some insight into a guy, who.

DOMINO

a film by Shanti Thakur

**Six stories
of interracial people's
quest to forge their
own identity**

**NFB Cinema
October 17 to 23
at 6:30 pm**

**OPENING NIGHT BENEFIT FOR THE
INTERRACIAL FAMILY ALLIANCE**
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Monday October 17 at 6:30 and 8:30 pm.

Panel "FORGING INTERRACIAL IDENTITY"
with community activists **Leith Hamilton,**
Hélène Wavroch and **Shanti Thakur** —
following 8:30 pm screening.

NFB CINEMA

1564 St. Denis
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Information: 496-6895



Monday, October 17, 1994 the National Film Board will premiere *Domino*, a documentary which portrays the poignant stories of six interracial people's quest to forge their own identity. This evening will not only premiere the first Canadian film on the issues of interracial people, it will also be the benefit night for Canada's first Interracial Family Alliance (IFA).

Although there is only one human "race", interracial people's experience underlines society's practice of categorizing people by "race" - which inherently challenges the embracing of both parents, both cultures.

A common experience interracial people share is being asked: "What do you consider yourself?" - which knocks over the first of many dominoes. *Domino* explores the kinds of issues which are triggered - questions about identity, cultural isolation and the search for community.

Director Shanti Thakur explores her own interracial identity by listening to the similarities and differences of interracial people. Some identify as one culture, both or neither. Through intensely personal stories, each person recounts how their identity was affected by the experience of their parents' history, family politics, the hierarchies of race, gender roles and class. Their outspoken views demonstrate how living intimately with two cultures can be a source of strength and enrichment.

The Interracial Family Alliance will have information available on the study groups, discussion groups and social activities available to both parents and children of interracial families.

Domino will be screened at the National Film Board of Canada October 17 - 23 at 5:30 pm. The premiere will take place Monday, October 17 at 6:30 and 8:30 pm. Director Shanti Thakur will be present at both screenings, invited speakers Leith Hamilton and Helene Wavroch (as seen in *Domino*) will be present after the 8:30pm screening. The National Film Board of Canada is located on 1564 St. Denis St. (Metro Berri) Suggested Donation: \$5.00

DOMINO is produced by the NFB (Ontario Centre) in association with Lucida Film Inc., with the participation of The Multiculturalism Programs of the Department of Canadian Heritage.

All tied up on a shoestring budget

by KATE KUNG

A few years back Robert Rodriguez caused a tremor with his no-budget film *El Mariachi*. His \$7000 film school project made waves when Columbia Pictures picked it up for theatrical distribution. Rodriguez had resorted to desperate measures to keep production costs down. Anticipating NAFTA, he shot his feature drama in Mexico. To fund the film, as he revealed to a symposium on creative film financing, he submitted himself to paid medical experimentation.

Although it's an amusing anecdote, it's barely feasible advice. Yet impending cuts to federal arts and funding agencies threaten to drive independent film and videomakers to apply their creativity to seeking out such alternatives to finance projects.

"A lot of independent film and videomakers seem to be headed towards welfare," said Montreal director Lynn Kamm.

Cuts to arts funding which began during the Tory era focused on trimming administrative fat are continuing to slice into operational budgets. The latest round of bloodletting promises to cut deeply into other major players on the film production scene with huge cuts to the National Film Board and Telefilm. A 5% to 8% cut to the NFB's budget over the next 4 years threatens to skewer their \$80 million dollar budget by at least \$16 million dollars.

"The cutbacks are going to force us to rethink the ways of wanting to work," said Patricia Kearns. Her film documentary *If the Family Fits* received a grant from the NFB's PAFPS - a program designed to aid independent films in the post-production phase. "Many independents rely on the PAFPS program. Where will these services be picked up?"

The strategy of Ribb'In Pride, the two year old production company she runs with playwright Steve Galluccio, is to have their finger in every pie. They are involved in sound production, video, theatre, and film. It's their way of being "flexible in order to survive."

"You've got to be as creative with funding tactics and can't rely on the Canada Council," said Kamm. "We're doing a video on menstruation companies and we're going to look for funding from sources like tampon companies."

On the provincial level, the restructuring of arts funding is also being seriously considered. A new superstructure under the name of SODEC (Société générale des industries culturelles).

"A very small amount - \$300,000 - has been placed aside for independent producers and directors. The rest (a figure) in the millions of dollars is being allocated to film production companies," explained Jean-Claude Butros, president of the board of the local film collective Main Film. "They are trying to build an industry and support production houses over a three years period. The focus is on industry

rather than individual artists."

The new agency is a bid for a more economic way of managing the arts, according to Butros but potentially at the cost of individual filmmakers. Although a proposal had been voted on, an Information Officer for SOGIC noted that it is currently "not in force".

"It was a Liberal initiative," said Sylvain Savard. "The current government may abandon it."

While arts and funding agencies are going under the knife without the benefit of anesthesia, the private sector promises

to provide a panacea with a new crop of specialty channels. Promising other alternatives for production financing, 10 networks were granted licenses from the CRTC including *Lifestyles*, a channel focussing on women's programming, and the arts channel *Bravo!* - operated by Moses (MusiquePlus, City TV, Much Music) Znamer.

"With the specialty channels, there is more acceptance to use Hi-8 video," says Kamm. "New specialty channels are willing to give budgets for independently produced shows. It's cheaper for them to look outside their networks (rather than produce their own shows)."

The announcement of new specialty channels by the CRTC, coincidentally on the 50th anniversary of D-Day, has had ironic consequences for two of the winning channels. Industry professionals have raised a ruckus over *Bravo!* and *Arts and Divertissements*, demanding the CRTC review their license grant. Critical of their mandates, a coalition including ACTRA and the Directors' Guild lobbied to ensure the development of a channel dedicated to funding and showing independent, locally produced work.

This lobbying for structural support addresses the decades old concern for steady diet of Canadian content. However, it falls short of the artistic concerns of local filmmakers.

"As a documentary filmmaker I would love to see a channel programming shows similar to community radio which runs a real gamut from information-based to far more experimental," Kearns mused. As it is, there is quite a bit of negotiation when one "starts thinking how to tailor an idea for (TV broadcast)."

With government arts and funding institutions sizing down, the inevitable narrowing of their scope threatens squeeze out risky and experimental work.

Independents will continue to run the gauntlet between funding agencies and commercial sector. But with the pies getting smaller they will have to be prepared to be hit with a lot more or risk falling out of the game.

"Something definite has happened here," said Butros. "If there was a battle, then it was lost along with a way of thinking about doing film. You must work one way or risk being marginalized completely."

Ribb'In Pride's production of *Sexual Success in Montreal* was presented at the Rialto Picks the Best of the Fringe Festival. *If the Family Fits* will be presented at the 5 Jours de Cinema.

**To
fund the
film...he submitted
himself to
paid medical
experimentation.**

FILM

THE POWER OF LOW ART

BY CATHLEEN SKIDMORE

We can run but we just can't hide. Media manipulation is at the rotting core of our collective taste. The new media darlings are the real life tragedies that shock, horrify, titillate and numb.

Cultural conditioning is being directed by a media aesthetic, a media which has indisputably crossed over to the realm of entertainment. Our culture is saturated with images that inform how we see. So much so that foreign aesthetics can be both confusing and dull.

Art has historically played the role of cultural reflection and direction, a mirror to society, a kind of sensitization to ourselves.

This years *Les Cent Jours d'Art Contemporain* gives us a peak at Italian culture. For the most part these artists throw their design history around like a comfortable old shoe. How well it fits over here is another matter.

It would be easy enough to poo poo most of the show with a jaw breaking yawn. A minimalist play of material and form has the potential to evoke a meditative mood but this experience lurks dangerously close to the line of sterility. In other words, is the Italian segment of the show really boring or have North American sensibilities been tarnished by the all-encompassing-fast-entertainment fix? And it's dead quiet.

The only audible sounds come from a video of a plant under a shower and the hollow, resonating footsteps of the security guards.

Ironically enough, MusicPlus is one of this years official sponsors. Strange bedfellows perhaps but an appropriate reflection of the local trend of bringing art out of the institutions to reach a more diversified audience.

If the Italians are taking a 60s Minimalist approach, what seems to be happening in our local scene is something the 70s movement is largely responsible for: getting the art out of the galleries and back to the public at large. Whether the accessibility of the work is reflected by the art's content or location, public access is the current wave.

Local art star Zilon still holds the graffiti reign after 10 years and his recent canvases have featured pop icons like Marge Simpson and Ronald MacDonald.



TOP TO BOTTOM Photo no. 1 Elvis as Jesus © 1990 Virgins for choice Photo no. 2 Mother's Elvis © 1990 Virgins for choice Photo no. 3 Chiara D'Amico installation—courtesy of CIAC taken by Guy L. Heurieu

The Montreal art collective FouArt is taking the phenomenon of *Peinture en Direct* many steps beyond and artist Shari Hatt invites you into her home.

Shari Hatt is a serial fan. If her infectious passion for Elvis isn't enough of a turn on to the late King, her Elvis museum might be. *The All Elvis Honky Honky Burning Love Museum* is "a multi-media extravaganza including anything and everything related to the King of Rock and Roll".

The video selection includes all of the Elvis movies, *Shelvis: Portrait of a Lady King* and *Shelvis Saves*. These two videos of Hatt are a campy, mock realization of her not so secret dream of becoming "the greatest Elvis impersonator the world has ever known."

"Unfortunately", she sighs with an exaggerated shrug, "I can't sing, dance or stand being in front of an audience."

The cult of Elvis is still a mystery. The theme was explored at length by *Artforum* writer Greil Marcus in *Dead Elvis*. American artist Joni Mabe has been all over the world with her travelling Elvis museum. But few artists can match

the fervour and dedication Hatt gives her museum and the manufacturing of the museum contents. "He is THE working class hero" she says standing next to a near life-size, tattooed Elvis in a bustier and stockings.

It's hard not to be affected by this spectacle that elevates Elvis to mythical proportions: Elvis as the Virgin, Elvis as Jesus, Elvis as Elizabeth Taylor; *King on a Hot Tin Roof*, juxtaposed with the original and sometimes sensitive reminders of human frailty. *Lunch Aug 15, 1977* (the day before Elvis died), a hospital pill dispenser filled with a colourful tablet cocktail, sits alongside *two beans from Elvis' failed science project* and a *dreadlock presented to Elvis by Bob Marley in 1972 with this advice "Elvis, lively up your hair."*

Strange references to media headlines sneak into the museum like the Prince Charles "I wish I was your tampon..." tapes. After parking his blue suede shoes under

ART

Queen Lizzie's bed, only to leave her in the lurch the very next day, the Queen of England sent the King of Rock and Roll this miniature cock ring in a bitter attempt at recrimination. She is rumoured to have whispered: "Elvis, you may have been my love tampon once, but now you're nuthin' but a belted maxi-pad!"

This small but powerful museum offers a poignant look at the state of our cultural tastes, hero worship and media entertainment; many of its artifacts a quintessential precursor of the signed John Wayne Bobbit kitchen knives. By manipulating the canons of high and low art, Hatt's museum becomes a burr under the post modern saddle, PoMo gone amok. In fact, a perfect companion piece to a show like the *Cents Jours*, (which, in spite of the criticism should be seen). Together, for a real high/low high.

Les Cents Jours d'Art Contemporain until Nov 27

3 Locations: 3576 Parc, 380 Prince Arthur, 314 Sherbrooke E.

For info on the Elvis Museum call 597-2658 bet 1-3 pm.

Grand re-opening, Jan 8, the King's 60th Birthday

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Les ailleurs de la danse



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ROTTEN: FRESH AS A DAISY

and, especially, indie labels: "I think they're false," he says. "there's a great deal of pretension and very little substance. They're all distributed by major labels, so what is the fucking difference? I'll tell you what it is, that they don't give their bands advances. You just get lost in a pile of trendiness..."

"Atlantic needed a hit indie record," says John about the label's distribution deal with Matador, "so they bought a label... Ouch! I'm on Atlantic! I don't make life easy for myself do I? ... They're gonna have to bury me kicking and screaming: I'm here to enjoy every last second."

"Isn't funny how people just love to exaggerate, to overindulge. They just won't see things as they are. I think that's why you vote for such corrupt presidents. Because it's so obvious they're corrupt that people can't see it -not being

able to see the woods for the trees."

True to form, Lydon won't countenance writers who over-theorize about the meanings of his work, either, even if they're giving him credit. In his introduction to Rotten, John disparages "journalistic psychobabble." And while not attacking him by name, the book contains several apparent jabs at the critic Greil Marcus, who analyzed the Pistols nearly into scholastic oblivion. In the chapter on U. K. punk in *The Rolling Stone Illustrated History of Rock & Roll*, he engaged in an extended deconstruction of "Holidays in the sun". Marcus then proceeded to use the Pistols as a jumping-off point for a book he called a cultural history of our era (*Lipstick Traces*, which sports a photo of Johnny Rotten on its cover). Has John read Marcus's work?

"Yeah. I've still yet find out what, exactly, he's going on

about," Lydon responds. "It's too preposterous, really. It's a fabulous lark. If I thought he was doing it, really, to just wind people up, I'd really really appreciate it. But I think it just overindulges on the pretense, and it becomes unbearable. Laughable..."

"He was trying to connect us to movements, to political thought processes, which, of course, we had nothing to do with at all. What on earth have I and Mickael Jackson got to do with Left Bank political wankers in Paris? Jesus..."

"That was exactly what it ["Holidays"] was about: going to Berlin with Sid on a holiday, and going up to the wall, and taking the piss out of the Russian soldiers on the other side. That's exactly it -and being blind drunk while doing it, knowing that we could be shot at any moment."

"There was a small punk following before [the "Anarchy in the U. K." single], but they

were mostly fashion victims. I know that sounds like me being ungrateful to say that, but indeed we all were. Everybody goes through those stages where you dress to be noticed. That is a fashion statement whether you like it or not."

When it's all done, *Rotten* succeeds in making the reader understand perfectly why John resents Malcolm, why his interviews seem almost invariably to devolve into verbal combat, why he's making a solo record (untitled as of yet). John does a quite through job of describing why he'll never sit still long enough for any of us to draw a bead on him.

"There was one gig. It was very odd. It was a Public Image performance in Paris. We strutted on, and this was the first they'd ever heard of PiL - they'd heard



the Pistols before- and we had the audience in complete silence for an hour and a half. They never applauded; they never responded. They just stared at us -they couldn't believe what the were hearing, I suppose -and then just silently left the building: no encore, nothing. And I thought, 'Wow, that's the most effective response, or lack of, that I've ever had in my life. This is right.' I mean, if you're bad, they boo. If it's something that completely new, you know that you're doing something right. I didn't really feel that very much in the Pistols, I must say."

Fresh-Prince of Bel Air on the large TV, set up facing the chairs for optimal viewing.

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Ebony and Ivory is located at 3296 St. Antoine W., near the Lionel Groulx metro.

EBONY AND IVORY-
THE SOURCE AND
SOUL OF LITTLE
BURGUNDY

Cut your hair

photos by Vinnie

At the base of the mountain, on the outskirts of Little Burgundy, St. Henri and Lower Westmount, there lies a no-man's land. A place where the non-official lines between English and French, black and white, rich and poor are drawn. It was here that I found the ultimate haircutting experience.

The traditional barber-shop atmosphere (local hang-out, discussions, and information source), quality barbers, and the latest styles in haircuts is a hard combination to find. Until recently I thought this to be an unachievable ideal.

At St. Antoine and just west of Atwater is *EBÈNE ET IVOIRE*. Owned and run by Little Burgundy's Trevor Williams and Dean Smith, *Ebony and Ivory* is a modern-day and youthful version of the traditional barbershop.

Having been in business for five years now, Trevor Williams says "you see a lot of information passing through here, when anything is happening, we're the first people to find out about it...and this is the first place people come when they're looking for information".

The barber shop is by no means a secret, when the *Expos* are in town (and playing ball) many of them frequent *Ebony and Ivory*.

Athletes themselves, Trevor Williams played basketball in the NCAA for Louisiana's Southern University (the largest black school in the states). Studying business management and finishing his studies at Concordia, Williams went on to play ball with the Canadian National Basketball team.

In the States Trevor received what he refers to as "practical, real-life education" that he utilised to start up this bustling business with Dean. Inquired about his training as a barber, Dean Smith says: "my father used to cut my hair, and all my siblings. When I got old enough he said 'Here, now it's your turn.'" He went on to say that if you're broke, and want to stay on the straight and narrow, "you will learn how to cut hair".

Growing up in Little Burgundy, Dean saw many of his peers taking up lives of crime. But with the help of Bob White, Director of the West End Sports Association, Smith says he may have headed in the same direction. Bob White helped Trevor Williams as well as Tommy Kane (also of Little Burgundy), formerly with the *Seattle Seahawks* (NFL) and now with the *Toronto Argonauts* (CFL), stay in school. With his guidance, they took their entrance

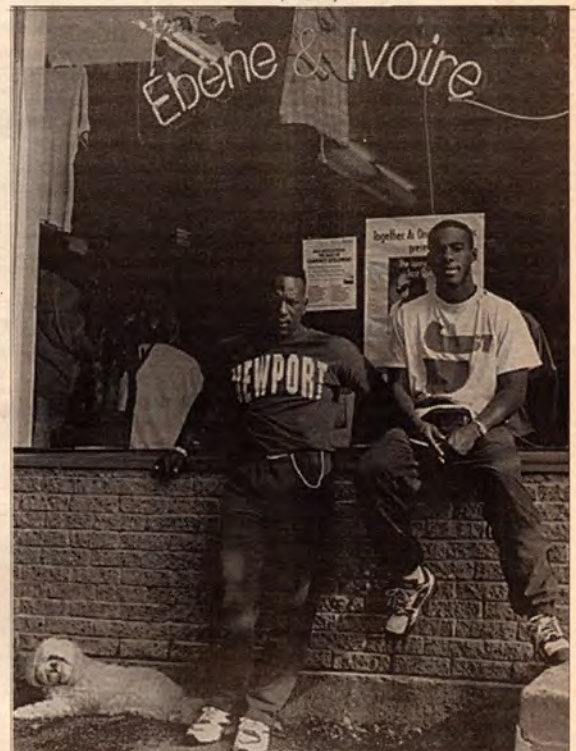
exams for American schools and received sports scholarships.

Trevor and Dean have taken it upon themselves to lead by example. Action-oriented, they're involved in all aspects of their community. When the kids come in for cuts, as Bob White did for them, they make sure the kids are doing their work and staying in school. If the neighbourhood kids can't afford cuts, they'll even give the kids free cuts. Dean says, "if two kids come in here, one of them gets a nice cut, and the other one's broke, we can't be letting him run around with a 'nappy' head, it's just not right."

A year ago they diversified their interests, starting *Spark Entertainment*, with a third partner Mark Davidson; a management company involved in hip-hop and entertainment.

Serving as counsellors, athletes, coaches, barbers, and businessmen, Trevor and Dean are greatly needed role-models in a splintered community.

During the duration of my haircut, the topics of discussion I partook in included U.S. intervention in Haiti, sports, hair, and the theological differences between the Nation of Islam and traditional religions. While receiving a stylish and slick fade, we watched the



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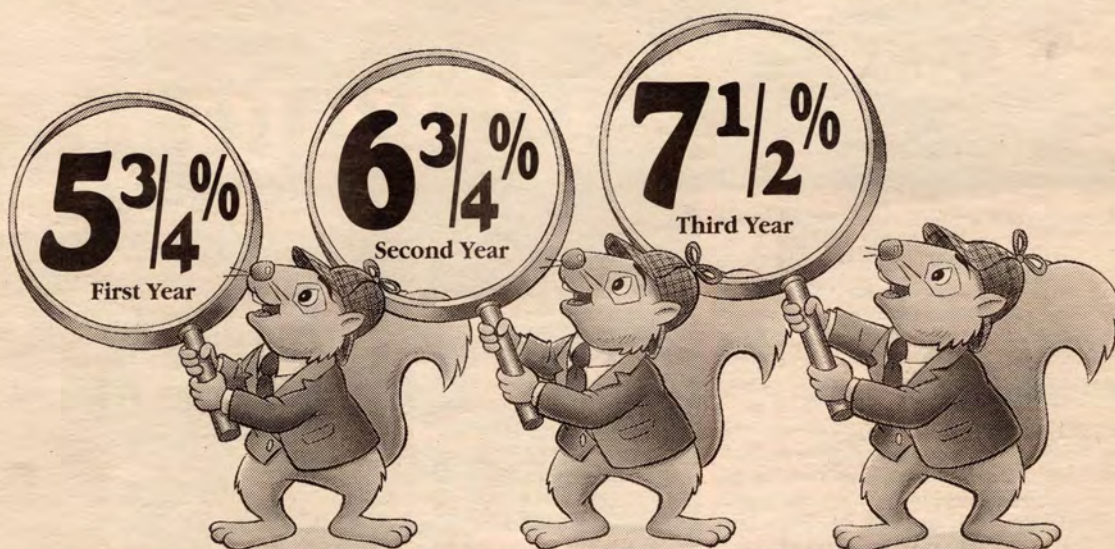
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